

SURVEILLANCE CAMERA TIP SHEET



The video surveillance camera has become a popular security measure for individual homeowners and homeowner associations who want to keep an eye on the behavior of those who are in and around their property. Surveillance cameras can provide a deterrent to criminal activity and a record when criminal activity occurs that can assist police in identifying the perpetrator(s).

In order for your recorded video to be of assistance to the police department in recording criminal incidents and identifying suspects, it must have a compatible recording format and possess sufficient resolution capabilities during both low light and daytime recording. Additionally, the recordings cannot violate certain privacy laws if it's to be used in a criminal proceeding.

There are a number of different home security surveillance cameras companies that you can choose from. The City of Auburn recommends that individuals and/or homeowner associations contract with reputable firms. They can provide an on-site analysis of your specific needs and make recommendations with a variety of video surveillance technologies. Keep in mind, the most expensive equipment is not always necessary to be effective. The following are some general guidelines to consider when selecting a video surveillance system:

- Each neighborhood is different; each system needs to be designed according to the neighborhood's geographic characteristics
- The surveillance video camera must have a corresponding recording system that can create a video clip of the incident that is compatible with Windows Media Player (most common formats are AVI And MPEG.)
- Recording systems with "proprietary, licensed players or codecs" cannot be accepted for Police or City use
- The Police Department can view recorded evidence/ events from either CD, DVD or VHS formats
- A hard wired or wireless system can be utilized, but the individual/HOA is responsible for downloading and copying the video from their respective systems
- Evaluate the video camera's resolution under varying lighting conditions and distances to ensure it is sufficient quality to identify identities and or license plates
- Washington State is a two-party consent state regarding recording audio conversations. Camera surveillance systems should be set to capture video only



- Cameras and associated equipment should be mounted only on the homeowner's or association's property, unless prior written approval is obtained from the City or utility company owner.
- Cameras should be securely mounted out of

- sight and out of reach to prevent theft or vandalism
- Cameras should be oriented to capture general or public areas, and not invade the privacy of a homeowner such as views through windows. The views should be oriented toward areas that are attractive to vandals or thieves



- Consider using signs in conjunction with the surveillance system to warn would-be perpetrators that the area is under surveillance
- Installing fake or mock cameras may provide some level of deterrence, but is of no use if a crime occurs
- Surveillance cameras can be used in conjunction with monitors to provide real-time security monitoring. Typically monitors are small CRTs (TVs), but more sophisticated surveillance systems can be viewed through a computer monitor. The system can even be networked to allow viewing on a number of computers. The downside of real-time viewing is that it is very time and labor intensive.
- Should you or your association install a video surveillance system, and become the victim of a crime or observe a crime in progress, call 911 immediately. Inform the investigating officer that you have a video surveillance system and be prepared to make a copy of the incident for the officer.

NOTE: The purpose of this information is not to endorse a particular product or manufacturer, but to provide some general information that will assist the public in their decision making process when considering the purchase and installation of a video surveillance system.